

Comments by Parties on the Extended Functional Review of the UNEP/MAP System

In the letter dated 28 March 2013, UNEP/MAP Secretariat kindly asked all the MAP Focal Points to provide written comments on the Extended Functional Review, so as to facilitate and support the discussions during MAP Focal Points Meeting, which would take place in Athens on 22-23 April 2013.

The comments received from the Parties as of 20 April 2013 are as follows:

Greece

As a general comment, we support the underlying idea of the Functional Review that UNEP/MAP needs to continue functioning as the central node for environmental protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean but also needs to be appropriately modernized.

We agree that there is a need for fundamental shifts in response to new developments that cut across the activities of MAP Components. To achieve that, we need increased coherence and coordination within the MAP System through a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches.

We take special note of the editors' remarks that a) the absence of a clear and consistent business model is a central issue that can be linked to many of MAP's problems or shortcomings and b) that "RACs continue to operate on the basis of highly individual agendas" and in this respect "the duality of RACs identities...is sometimes problematic...".

The need for clearer prioritization of work is also a key issue since it removes uncertainty and facilitates effective delivery.

We noted that the latest version of the Functional Review (Doc. UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.376/Inf.3/28-03-2013) does not include the section on MCSD titled "Need for strengthened MCSD" which was included in the initial Report of Extended Functional Review (Doc. UNEP/BUR/76/Inf.4/01-02-2013). The issue of the MCSD should be further looked into in relation to the Functional Review.

We also agree on the need to work together with other regional organizations such as the UfM, as well as with specialized organizations, such as the UNFCCC or the IMO, and leverage their expertise, especially in non-core areas of work.

Concerning the 3 options elaborated in the functional review, we have a positive inclination towards what is described in option 2 but we remain open to hearing other parties' views on the matter especially regarding options 1 and 2.

Israel

In order to facilitate a fruitful debate at the upcoming meeting of Focal Points in Athens, we are providing some initial written comments, as requested. No doubt the materials and opinions presented at the meeting itself will give rise to additional contributions and this document is provided without prejudice to subsequent interventions.

The Functional Review (FR) prepared by Dahlberg is a thorough and thoughtful document and provides an excellent opportunity for the Contracting Parties to reexamine the efficacy with which the mandate of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols as well as the other roles of the Mediterranean Action Plan are being executed. We should welcome this opportunity and thank all those who contributed the information necessary to produce the Review. We also commend the consultants for having seen the opportunity and risen to the challenge to provide additional business models reflecting the deeper issues beyond the budgetary saving one originally examined. We have been provided with professional food for thought

We agree that first and foremost, MAP's core functions must be executed. Implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its legally binding protocols and plans heads this list and therefore the bodies (the Coordinating Unit, MEDPOL, REMPEC and the Regional Activity Centers) executing this function, must be financially secured via the MTF. Of course, all reasonable and feasible means to reduce expenditures must be made and we would like all potential cost cutting measures raised in the FR to be considered and reported on to the MAP FP meeting (these include suggestions as to national employment as opposed to UN employment; reclassification of senior positions etc). However, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention have made decisions over the years, which impose obligations beyond protocol implementation for which funds must currently be allocated until decisions revoking them are taken.

Option 2 as proposed in the FR suggests a differential payment to those RAC's performing core functions but differs from option 1 in proposing "scalable" funding per project for non-core matters which would be open to all RACs, thereby promoting cooperation based on their relative strengths and diminishing overlap and repetition. This proposal does not propose an equal across the board reduction in funding for all the RACs (a 15% reduction was suggested) and we believe this to be a correct approach. The restructuring of funding should be based on the functions and services provided by each RAC) Option 2 has the advantage of providing for flexibility in programming and its modular structure should ensure that in times of financial constraint, it will be clear ahead of time which functions MAP and its RACs will be able to continue carrying out and which will be deferred until alternative funding can be obtained.

Option 3 has certain strong appeal as a business model in that no one body is guaranteed MTF funding - rather all MAP activities are open for bidding. This should ensure that the most appropriate body, not necessarily RACs will carry out activities in a cost effective manner and this should encourage cooperation with other bodies fulfilling related functions. However, the approved option must bring improvements which are also practicable and implementable without too much upheaval and Option 3, while being efficient, could undermine some of the benefits of the current system. In addition, the country Parties have ongoing links with the RACs and their professional staff and receive advice and assistance on an ongoing basis. These regional centers coordinate cooperation between the focal points and other professional staff in their specific areas of expertise thereby creating a network of professional cooperation in the region. It would be a great pity to lose this level of cooperation. In addition, those countries which host RACs are providing financial support at

some level to the functioning of the RACs and it is uncertain whether under the "free market" model of Option 3, this support would continue.

Under Option 2, there are activities which currently form the Programme of Works which the consultants recommend be omitted in the future even as "scalable" activities, presumably unless funding becomes available. For this to be practicable, the Parties and MAP and RAC focal points will have to receive guidance during the process of drafting the organization's programme of work. While the Parties to the convention are sovereign, efforts must be made to ensure that the Parties remain aware of the need to decide if an initiative conforms with the core aims and mandate of the organization (within its "business model" in the language of the FR) and if a departure is consciously decided upon, then the appropriate funding and the means for securing it has been formulated.

At this initial stage, Option 2 would seem to be the preferable one but we have seen the documents details some concerns which need to be addressed and which need to be discussed in more detail at the upcoming meeting.

The Barcelona Convention, the Mediterranean Action Plan and its components are more than a means for the execution of projects and services. It is an organization characterized by a high level of regional cooperation - the benefits of which should be cultivated while ensuring that, as the consultants state "the system can grow and contract without threatening its financial stability".

Italy

At the 17th COP held in Paris last year, the MS was required to deal with the critical financial situation of the Barcelona Convention, due to administrative and budgetary mismanagement for which the Parties were not liable. After a demanding discussion, the Parties agreed to bear the financial burden of deficit recovery out of their ordinary contributions. This agreement was also accepted by Italy, despite its particularly onerous nature, as it is the second MTF contributor. As an essential component of this agreement and in order to ensure future financial sustainability, increased flexibility and efficiency for the MAP system, the Parties agreed, adopting a specific decision (IG 20/8), to carry out a substantial review of the structure of the MAP system through an extended functional review which should lead to a significant reduction of operating costs, ensure that the MTF resources will be appropriately allocated among all MAP components and in particular to substantially rebalance the ratio between staffing and activities thereby freeing up funds to support the implementation of the priority activities of the Map program. This overall reform will be discussed and agreed by the 18th COP, which will be held in Ankara next December, and implemented during the next biennium 2014-2015.

Italy, therefore, welcome the report on the Extended Functional Review of the Mediterranean Action Plan (ONEP/MAP) as an essential step towards achieving the goal of adopting an appropriate and effective decision to implement the reform of the MAP system during the next biennium by the next COP. Italy congratulates the Coordinating Unit, the Consultants and the Contact Group for the findings highlighted in the report, which it endorses in full. Italy supports in particular option 2, Scalable system, out of the options presented by the report, as the most suitable for achieving the overall goals of the reform of the MAP system, although considers option 1, Cost-reduction, to be practicable. Italy also agrees and supports the content of Annex G of the report, concerning detailed implementation plans for options 1 and 2, as a sound basis for the timely and efficient implementation of the new model of Map system, as will be decided by the COP.

Italy considers that the proposals included in the report on the Extended Functional review concerning the REMPEC Centre, the contents of which are shared with all three options

considered, are a suitable and practicable solution for resolving the situation of that Map component.

Italy takes also note of the decision adopted by the bureau of the Convention at its 76th meeting, as included in the report, point 19, to "request the Secretariat to submit an initial draft implementation plan to MAP FPs in their meeting in April" and is looking forward to receiving the aforementioned "initial draft implementation plan" as an essential basis for the discussion to be held at the next NFPs meeting in Athens.

Italy is of the view that the core results of the Athens' NFPs meeting should be a sound discussion and conclusive decisions on the preferable option from those presented by the report on the Functional Review and the manner of its timely implementation during the next biennium in order to enable the road map which will lead to the preparation, discussion and adoption of a relevant decision at the next COP, along with its implementation during the biennium 2014-2015.

Italy wishes to point out that, according to the last COP decision on Governance IG 20/8, "all necessary consultations concerning the Extended Functional review will take place during 2013 to prepare a proposal on implementing the outcome of the functional review and its implications for the budget for consideration and adoption by the Contracting Parties in 18th meeting" and that, therefore, the preparation of the biennium 2014-2015 budget proposal should duly reflect this instruction.

Italy has full confidence in the commitment and capacity of the Coordinating Unit under the coordination of the Executive Secretary to carry out all necessary activities enabling the COP to adopt a sound solution in a timely and efficient manner which will enable the Map system to achieve its strategic goals to the full, and is willing to cooperate in order to achieve this common purpose.